



**City of Seattle**  
Mayor Jenny A. Durkan

## **NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR**

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# **Mayor Durkan Announces \$1.5 Million Fund to Invest Directly in Small Businesses Impacted by COVID-19**

## *Signs Executive Order to Help Small Businesses and Their Workers*

**Seattle** (March 12, 2020) – Building on measures focused [on supporting small businesses](#), Seattle Mayor Jenny A. Durkan announced a \$1.5 million City of Seattle fund to invest directly in small businesses financially impacted by COVID-19. The fund is an expansion of the Office of Economic Development’s (OED) Small Business Stabilization Fund, which the Mayor created to support small businesses whose operations were jeopardized by a destabilizing event. Eligible small businesses will receive a grant of up to \$10,000 to mitigate revenue lost by COVID-19. Mayor Durkan formally [signed an Executive Order](#) to provide immediate relief for small businesses impacted by COVID-19. Actions include the ability to defer B&O taxes and utility payments, direct technical assistance with SBA loans, and the creation of the [Small Business Recovery Task Force](#) to advise on long-term policy recommendations.

“Our small businesses have been devastated in recent weeks, and we know the crisis will be felt for months. It’s why I’ve been urging the President to declare a national emergency to provide even more relief to individuals and businesses – we cannot do it without more resources from our state and federal government,” said Mayor Durkan. “With this fund, we’re investing directly in our most vulnerable small businesses and doing everything possible to keep them afloat during this unprecedented moment in history. So many of these businesses are woven into the fabric of our neighborhoods, and they serve as trusted community meeting places. While the City and State have taken some initial actions to help support workers, we are evaluating robust actions that we can take at the City level, understanding we will need scale our response exponentially with resources from the state and federal government.”

The Mayor’s expanded Small Business Stabilization Fund will focus outreach on historically underserved small businesses who may be overlooked by the federal government’s Small Business Administration (SBA) disaster relief program. To qualify for a grant from the stabilization fund, small businesses must have five employees or less, the owner must be at or below 80 percent of the Area Median Income, the business must have a physical establishment, and the business must be financially impacted by COVID-19. OED will conduct targeted outreach to small businesses in high displacement areas, as those businesses carry a greater burden in trying to thrive in today’s economy.

“This additional \$1.5 million fund will serve as a stop gap for some of our smallest businesses who are historically underserved by traditional and other federal financing programs,” said Councilmember [Tammy J. Morales](#) (District 2, South Seattle and the CID). “I have confidence in the Office of Economic Development to swiftly distribute these funds, so businesses already suffering greatly will have relief sooner, and potentially remain open longer, creating stability for their employees

and community. I continue to encourage every Seattle resident who is healthy and able to patronize local businesses. We must continue to support them and each other during this health crisis.”

“Mayor Jenny Durkan and the Office of Economic Development are proposing immediate relief to our small businesses who are faced with punishing economic hardship due to COVID-19. By expanding OED’s Small Business Stabilization Fund, grants up to \$10,000 will be immediately deployed to our small businesses. Our small businesses are the economic and cultural pillars of Seattle. We are committed to doing everything we can to support them during this unprecedented time,” said OED Director Bobby Lee.

OED will immediately begin accepting applications for the expanded Small Business Stabilization Fund. Eligible small businesses [can apply by filling out a simple one-page form on OED’s website](#), and the City’s Small Business Liaisons will conduct targeted outreach and technical assistance to ensure historically underserved communities like immigrants and refugees, communities of color, and business owners who speak a language other than English apply. Once an eligible business owner applies, OED will send financial assistance within one week. Applications and grants for the Fund will continue on a rolling basis.

Initial analysis from the Office of Economic Development (OED) shows that small businesses are being significantly impacted by COVID-19. According to Visit Seattle, average hotel occupancy rates during the week of March 2 dropped as low as 30 percent or less. Normally, they would be above 70 percent. In addition, many restaurants are reporting 40 percent drops in business for that same week. According to data from the [JP Morgan Chase Institute](#) on small business resiliency, the median small business only holds 27 cash buffer days in reserve in the case of economic shock, and that number is significantly lower for labor-intensive and low-wage industries.

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